



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE MORAL EFFECTS OF WAR AND PEACE.

C. DELISLE BURNS.

THE statement that peace weakens a nation is only made by those who have too little to do. And yet a popular acceptance of this creed of the clubs has done much to bring on the present war. There is at least a sneaking suspicion that manhood is tested by warfare, and it is said that in Germany even learned professors have supported the superstition.

I do not in the least deny that war may be an occasion for moral development, or that virtues may appear in war which do not appear in peace; but so may disease be an occasion for virtues which cannot appear when one is in health. It would not follow that disease was in any sense more valuable morally than health unless the *total results* of disease were morally preferable to the total results of health. And since we may now have evidence as to the moral effect of war, it is time to consider what may be the moral effects of peace.

First, then, I shall attempt to show that peace does not weaken the civilized man; and next I shall cast doubt upon the too prevalent superstition that manhood is tested by warfare.

1. *Interests Excited:* (1) Diversity among men in the same nation:

A man is weakened by the disuse of some of his muscles, or, in the higher sense, by the "balking" of his dispositions and the suppression of his mental energies. But energies, dispositions or muscles are called into action by interests. The psychologists say that attention is of vital importance, for where the attention is attracted an interest will arise and action will follow. Different objects will attract different men. The attention of a savage is attracted by a string of beads, but a book of verse will leave him cold and

therefore inactive. The savage will attend if you hit him on the head but not if you speak of quaternions; he will work for a meal but not for a Rembrandt. It follows that objects which will excite one man to action will leave another inactive and, therefore, weaken him. There will be nothing in such objects for him to exercise his muscles or his disposition or his energies upon, for there will be nothing in them which excites his interest or holds his attention. Any man whose interest is not excited tends to moral decadence since his faculties sleep; and if his interest is excited only by a few interests his moral character will probably be, in proportion, undeveloped.

Now peace is a situation in which the objects of interests and the purposes of action are many and various, but they are somewhat subtle. The blind man may treat color as nonexistent and the fool may refuse to believe that anything is worth working for which he cannot see from his narrow windows. He is inactive because he is not excited to action; he is weakened because he can see nothing to do. So that there may be opportunities for moral development which cannot be used because they are not perceived. A nation which "rots" in time of peace is thereby proved to be uncivilized; and I am not denying that nations do decay. I accept the fact thus stated by historians, although I think it may be disputed. But it does not follow that civilized life is the cause of national decay. It is with a group of men as it is with each singly. If you place a muscular savage in a chemical laboratory, his muscles will be atrophied and he himself will perhaps become degraded and vicious. But surely that is not due to the degrading influence of chemistry, for if you place a trained student there he will seize the opportunity to develop perhaps unsuspected abilities.

So also a group of men who are all eyes at a football match will yawn before a Velasquez; and if you give them too much Velasquez and no football the whole group will decay. A nation decays for like reasons. No nation is homogeneous and the few who are interested in science

and art, and are therefore active in such pursuits, are surrounded by masses for whom the objects of art do not exist and the uses of science are trivial. I do not complain of such facts. It may be that civilization and the employments of peace will never really affect the majority in any nation, or that the cultured but brainless among the "upper" classes will never be excited by any but the crudest interests. Peace cannot make a savage or an ape into a civilized human being. It is after all only an opportunity for employment in more varied or subtle tasks than the search for food and clothing; and if such opportunities cannot be used by a nation then the nation will decay. From such weakening and its consequent decay war may indeed save a people as yet at the savage stage in development, as it may save the colonel who sleeps all day in peace at his club. The muscular savage is saved from degradation by being taken out of the chemical laboratory and sent to collect scalps; and I do not deny that collecting scalps may give him a better chance of developing his ability than smashing test-tubes. Thus opportunities being neglected does not prove anything against the situation, but may be evidence against those who do not use it.

(2) To show, however, that peace is an opportunity for development it is necessary to decide whether it has been so used.

Now there are men whose interests are not confined to the collecting of scalps, who may be more excited by a chemical experiment than by a football-match, and whose muscles may indeed be weakened in proportion as their brain is exercised. In many nations these are to be found existing in the environment of the more primitive type.

The opportunities offered by peace are used by them in the increase of mastery over natural forces and in the development of their own and their neighbor's knowledge of the universe or of man. They "energise freely" in situations which only create somnolence among the primitive. They see and feel objects unknown to the observer of football or the taster of cocktails.

Such men may be called "weaklings," or "mugwumps"; and I do not by any means say that they are better than the muscular savage. All that is really in question here is whether they are any worse, or whether a nation of scientists is in any sense "decadent" as compared with a group of savages. But it follows from what I have said above that, since no nation is homogeneous, the uncivilized in any group may be "decadent" when the civilized are developing, and it does *not* follow that because the savage would be decadent in a laboratory the civilized man would be in the same state. The barbarous appellation of "weaklings" as applied to intelligent men is a confession of ignorance: it implies that the "robust" do not understand how much energy it takes to do intellectual work. So to a man born blind it may be difficult to explain why anyone should paint pictures, for it is work in a region which is not marked upon his map and is therefore treated as non-existent. Peace, however, cannot be altogether an opportunity for decay if there are some in the nation who use it for development; and if these few are increasing in number, peace will be positively useful morally to more. It will be held by many, however, that there is something "unnatural" in the intelligent and unwarlike man, as of a creature all brain and no muscle. It will be asked whether the rest of our activities should be sacrificed to brain-process; and it will be implied that the result of civilized or peaceful interests is permanent dyspepsia and priggishness. Especially perhaps in England there is a feeling that intellectual interests are somewhat uncanny and often improper. Appalling results are anticipated when more men are able to think as only the few do now. We hear of a "heartless" civilization. But this is the attitude of the gorilla who cannot understand how different the situation will be when there are more men in existence. The gorilla thinks that a world without him would be decadent.

For this reason it is sometimes necessary to say—what should be perfectly obvious—that a man who is not muscular may not be *unhealthy*. Many inhabitants of labora-

tories may sacrifice their health, but in that far they will be bad chemists. Health is just as essential, I think, perhaps more essential, to the pursuits of peace than to those of war. And as for the *results* of peace, will anyone say that peace produces more disease than war? But in the words "weakling" and "brainy" there is implied some physical deficiency of health or bodily well-being. The lack of muscular development if the brain is used we all admit, but why should we deplore it? Surely it is only bad if it implies ill health or disease. Probably in spite of the endless wars of history the present Germans are less muscular than their ancestors who ran about in woods; but if they are healthy they are no worse. Yet Prince von Bülow calculates "health" solely by reference to "fitness for military service,"¹—a crude criterion.

It must be agreed then that if peace necessarily increases ill health it is an agency for decay; but it does not. And if it produces less muscular development because of other developments, then it is not an agency for decay; for the other developments are at least as valuable morally as is the development of muscle.

2. *Activity in War:* The value of peace for development, or at least as an opportunity for *resisting* decay, can be seen further by referring to the results of war. I shall put aside for the present the possibility of using an evil as an opportunity for good. I shall not refer yet to the sense of patriotism and the unselfishness which seem to come in times of war. All these may be valuable morally, but there is the more fundamental or simple effect of war upon the energy and activity of a nation. It is said that war at least keeps the nation active.

Let us turn then to this effect of war upon a nation and let us put aside the fact that great numbers are killed; for those at least do not share in the supposed benefit to the national "strength." The rest, I suppose, are prevented from decadence by the stern employments of war. We are

¹ *Imperial Germany*, p. 215, where statistics as to "health" are taken from a list of those capable of military service.

told that "slackers" and "mugwumps" and "weaklings" are reduced in numbers and the "nation" is kept from decadence. In fact the vast majority of interests cease, and one interest or a few employ all the nation; but is not *this* decadence? And even though the whole body of the nation are giving to the actual fighting an attention which could never be excited even by the most important football match, the vast majority are looking on and their own labor, even in the making of shirts for the wounded, is lessened by the amount of energy spent in futile discussion or vapid expectation of news. But is not this what creates "slackers" and "weaklings"?

Next, very different men, with very different abilities, employed in peace in varied production, are in wartime all assimilated as "soldiers." But this surely is decadence for the nation, in so far as it is a set-back to the development of all who might do something else much better than they can do soldiering. Let us imagine a situation in which not only artists and scientists but salesmen and cobblers and journalists had all to give up their special knowledge and skill in varied pursuits in order to bake bread: the result would be bad for the nation as a whole not because the greater number would be bad bakers but because of the loss of ability for other purposes. In war-time the more soldiers the better, and even a bad soldier may be more useful than a good scholar; but war is bad for the man who has ability for other things and can only be a soldier. War restricts opportunity for individual development, and therefore atrophies half of the activities of the nation. War is in that sense a direct cause of national decadence. So far from increasing the activity, it really reduces the number and variety of the energies exerted in peace. It destroys specialization and in that way limits the opportunities of individual development; but a nation is more highly developed in proportion to the number and variety of its citizens, and a perfectly homogeneous crowd is less civilized than a company of diverse characters. I shall not refer to the long periods of inaction which the soldier

has to endure, for I think that even if every soldier were active continuously the fact that there is less individuality in war shows the danger to moral development.

3. *Manhood in War*: It may be said, however, that this similarity of action which is forced on men who are capable of very diverse energies is useful for the sake of "manhood" or "manliness." The specialist, artist or poet, is after all a man and war makes him "more of a man." But is "manhood" more tested and therefore more developed by war than by peace?

In the first place it is well to note that even if courage and endurance are indeed promoted by warfare that would not prove war morally more useful than peace. It may be admitted that disease tests endurance, and to be operated upon may test one's courage; but no one suggests the spread of disease for moral results or the increase of surgical operations. It is good to "make the best of a bad job"; but that does not show that the "bad job" should be created in order that we may make the best of it. Thus in spite of the "endurance" and "manliness" developed by disease it is generally admitted that health is a better occasion even for "endurance"; or at least that the total effects of health are morally better.

Man does indeed progress by overcoming difficulties, but there are quite enough difficulties not of our own making for us to exercise our endurance or courage upon. It was a false system of education that created obstacles in order to train the child; for it wasted valuable years in artificial efforts which might have been spent in gathering strength for the only too great difficulties of real life. It would follow that, although so long as war exists we may find in it opportunity for courage, there will be no lack of opportunity even if war should cease; just as while children were tortured with Greek paradigms, they might have found in them an opportunity for training their memories; but there is much to remember even though we are not asked to learn lists of irregular verbs. Thus also so long

as a man has typhoid he may practice endurance, but there will be other opportunities even if he is cured.

So much negatively—but positively I am not so sure that war does give more opportunity for courage and endurance than does peace. Again I seem to feel the distinction between different kinds of men. Some, I admit, find opportunity for courage only in the danger of death or maiming; and all would need some courage to face such dangers. But with a more subtle mind one may discover other opportunities for endurance or courage.

Duelling was practiced in England less than a hundred years ago, and it required a sort of courage to stand up before another man with a loaded pistol. In German Universities courage is maintained by private combats with swords which slash or maim. It needed some courage to be a gladiator in ancient Rome; and, I suppose, every man could practice in his bed-room a sort of courage by holding his finger in a candle-flame.

Now peace provides admirable opportunities for such courage—indeed many more than does war. The risks one may take in peace are very great indeed. Suppose, for example, every adult male were made to balance himself upon the cross on the dome of St. Paul's. The nation would doubtless progress in endurance and courage at the cost of perhaps fifty per cent killed or wounded; and it would be a test less expensive to carry out than warfare is. A thousand other tests could be devised in time of peace and thus this particular kind of courage would not be allowed to die out. But the point is that we have managed as a race to do without certain opportunities for courage. Savages have very frequent occasions for such virtue; life is less dangerous now; but is it, on the whole, less valuable morally?

If we are to progress at all some opportunities for the display of courage must disappear. Few regret that it is impossible now to burn heretics and all, I think, are willing to give up a practice which for other reasons was bad although it gave the heretic opportunity for a particular

kind of courage and endurance. The courage of the gladiator has disappeared, and are we therefore decadent? Suppose then that warfare were to cease, not absolutely and in the millennium, but now and just for a time; we should then sacrifice the opportunity for that particular type of courage and endurance which is provided by battles. But should we be any the worse? Would our "manhood" have less opportunity to show itself? It seems that our loss of opportunity for display of one kind of endurance would involve an immense gain in opportunities for the display of other kinds of endurance and innumerable other virtues. There would be, of course, many who would be unable to use such opportunities either through ignorance or intellectual incompetence; but we might well sacrifice the development of the peculiar virtues of these men to the development of the varied virtues of the majority; for where there is one man who can only develop in war there are a thousand who can develop more fully in peace. And I am speaking now not of a purely intellectual development but of all that separates real "manhood" from beastliness. The opportunities for the full development of all that makes a man—courage, endurance, perseverance, high enterprise and honesty as well as benevolence and chivalry—are to be found much more in peace than in war.

Blind fools see only the gallantry of troops marching to drum and fife; they cannot see the endurance of the undecorated and uncheered multitude who tramp daily to inglorious labor for their wives and children down to the factory and home again. No trumpet sounds the praise of these, whose dumb endurance for generations has built the nation. No one says we are proud of them. They are not thanked by King or Parliament, and the newspapers do not publish the names of the dead and maimed.

4. *Unselfishness*: Finally, it is said that war is morally valuable because of the increase of patriotism and unselfishness. Thus the many private interests of a commercial peace are subordinated to the public welfare: men and

women think first of what they must do for others. The wounds of soldiers, the poverty and disease of the nation are at last cared for; and money is spent upon other things than private needs or private enjoyment.

It is indeed a complete condemnation of the industrial and commercialized peace which has existed to say that the vast majority have had no interest in their fellowmen. War is indeed useful morally if it can at least excite even a transient unselfishness. It is well that men should feel at least for a moment their debt to the State, to the poor and the diseased, to the nation which has made even their pleasures possible. And it is not simply the rich who are benefited morally by the discovery that life is not all "beer and skittles"; even the poor may gain morally by the sense of solidarity which a common danger gives. So that the chasm, the suspicion and misunderstanding which separates the few from the many in a commercialized peace may, even for a few months, be closed. All this is moral gain from war. But let us not therefore praise war, for peace, too, has its opportunities for unselfishness and patriotism. That these opportunities have not been used by rich or by poor, by fool or by scholar, is a condemnation, not of peace but of the primitive attitude of mind, the savage and uncivilized atmosphere, which commerce has created and a false education has maintained.

In England now the ladies are making shirts for the soldiers; but the men were without shirts before they enlisted. If the new activity is really unselfish and not simply the eagerness of selfish and incompetent sentimentalists who want to make the poor die happily in defence of the possessions of the rich, if it is not the mere egotism of a clique and is really patriotism—why for generations have the poor been uncared for? Why has anyone who thinks of more than getting an income and enjoying it been regarded as a wonderful exception or a laughable "freak"? Is it because of the moral ineffectiveness of peace or because of the lack of intelligence which cannot feel for a fellowman until one's own happiness is obstructed? On

a ship in a storm the passengers have often become friendly who before were hostile and divided: so difficult is it for men to see a common interest when their own interest is not obviously in danger.

So long as men need war to make them feel their common interests, so long will the good effects following from the evil of war give an excuse for many to praise war. But is there no other and better way of exciting patriotism and unselfishness? Not, I think, among the unthinking or among the savage and uncivilized; not certainly among the machines which men have become in the industrial system. It is with a sense of relief and of high adventure that many a mechanical clerk or laborer has enlisted now: at least now he feels that he is doing something more and worthier than drudging for his private income and enjoyment. But that is because he was not able to see the value of his work in peace for unselfish and patriotic ends; or because no one suggested such motives as a reason for keeping accounts or digging coal. That so great an evil as war should be the only occasion upon which we hear anything of unselfishness as an element in action, condemns—not peace, but the lack of moral perception and moral character which has been condoned during years of “laissez-faire.” No one is now ashamed of saying that men should die for their country; but everyone in times of peace has been afraid of saying that men should live for their country. And if we are not careful the ultimate result of this war will be, not a continuance of that momentary unselfishness which danger has excited, but a return to the old egoism and the old class war. When the storm is over the passengers in the ship of state will begin again their carping criticism, their slander, their mutual hostility and their primitive selfishness. The ladies will cease making shirts for the needy and the gentlemen, no longer under arms, will see no further duty to their country except the shooting of partridges or the sleeping in clubs. Then once again we shall hear of the moral benefits of war from those who can find nothing to do, so long as pain or distress does not touch them.

C. DELISLE BURNS.

LONDON.